

**To:** Smith, Paula[Smith.Paula@epa.gov]  
**From:** Lincoln, Larry  
**Sent:** Tue 8/11/2015 8:04:34 PM  
**Subject:** FYI

Paula,

You and your team are in my thoughts during this trying time. Although the task is difficult I know you and the rest of the professionals in Region 8 are up to it. Please let me know if we can be of assistance here in Region 4. I also wanted to share with you the contents of an email I recently received. Having living in Colorado for many years I suppose I'm still included on a number of lists. In the event you haven't seen this, I hope you find the content helpful.

Hang in there!

Larry

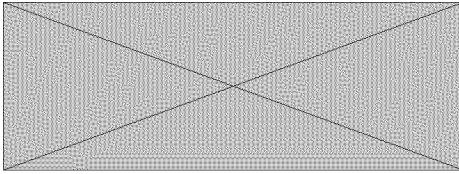
Larry S. Lincoln  
Director  
Office of External Affairs  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 4  
Phone: (404) 562-8304  
e-mail: [lincoln.larry@epa.gov](mailto:lincoln.larry@epa.gov)

<http://www.epa.gov/region4/newsevents/index.html>

Follow Region 4 on Twitter: [www.twitter.com/EPASoutheast](https://www.twitter.com/EPASoutheast)

and Facebook: [www.facebook.com/eparegion4](https://www.facebook.com/eparegion4)

**From:** "Amy Runyon-Harms, ProgressNow Colorado" <[info@progressnowcolorado.org](mailto:info@progressnowcolorado.org)>  
**Date:** August 11, 2015 at 1:57:26 PM EDT  
**To:**  
**Subject: Animas River disaster: what you need to know**  
**Reply-To:** "Amy Runyon-Harms, ProgressNow Colorado"  
<[info@progressnowcolorado.org](mailto:info@progressnowcolorado.org)>



Hello \_\_\_\_\_

Last week, a crew working for the Environmental Protection Agency to reduce pollution from abandoned mines near Silverton accidentally released a torrent of mine wastewater into a tributary of the Animas River. This polluted water flowed through the city of Durango, turning the Animas bright yellow and forcing water users along the river to shut off irrigation and drinking water. Rafting and other tourism-related businesses in the area have been devastated by the sudden loss of income at the height of the tourist season.

It's a very difficult situation, and unfortunately, some are trying to make it even worse by playing politics and misleading the public about the true cause of the disaster. Here are a few important points to help understand what happened and what it means for the future in southwest Colorado. Please share this information with your friends and neighbors.

**Q. Did the EPA “cause” the Animas River mine water spill?**

Yes and no. Abandoned hard-rock mines in the mountains above Silverton have been a source of water pollution for many years. The EPA was investigating ongoing water pollution from these mines. A large quantity of wastewater had built up behind loose debris and rushed out suddenly after the entrance to the mine was cleared. In short, the EPA did cause the spill, but not the pollution itself. The EPA was working to clean up the pollution.

**Q. If these mines have been polluting for decades, why isn't the cleanup operation a Superfund site?**

Unfortunately, the designation of abandoned mines near Silverton as an EPA Superfund cleanup site, which would allow far more resources to be deployed to clean up mine water pollution, has been opposed by the local government of San Juan County and mining interests. Some say the designation would hurt tourism revenue, but more importantly, mining interests fear restrictions on future operations if the Superfund were used to clean up existing pollution. Mining companies have consistently failed to take responsibility for the longstanding

pollution problems near Silverton and thousands of other mine sites across Colorado and the West.

### **Q. What happens next?**

As water conditions in the Animas River slowly return to their pre-spill state, the state and federal governments are working together to assess the extent of the damage and restore the river to health and economic prosperity. It's critical that local businesses and water users get help and compensation to minimize their losses. But above all, it's time for mining interests and local politicians who support them to get out of the way of properly cleaning up Silverton's polluted abandoned mines. Without the full resources of the federal government to treat mine wastewater and prevent catastrophic build-ups, downstream communities along the Animas will continue to be threatened by disaster.

***Please take a moment to share this important information with your friends and neighbors--especially in the areas affected by the spill.*** Traditional opponents of the EPA like oil and coal companies are misusing this incident to unfairly attack good people who are working to leave our state better than they found it. We owe it to ourselves and future generations to clean up the mess caused by the mining industry in the past. And when the news cameras are gone and the politicians are done talking, the EPA will still have an important job to do in southwest Colorado.

Thanks very much for helping us set the record straight.

Sincerely,



Amy Runyon-Harms

[Signup for Daily News Digest](#)

© 2015 ProgressNow Colorado

[About](#) - [Contact](#) - [Opt-out](#)  
[Donate](#) - [Email Preferences](#)

